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STRENGTHENING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Letter dated 5 October 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit, attached hereto, the letter by H.E. Mr. Zoran Thaler, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present and the aforementioned letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 163.

(Signed) Dr. Danilo TÜRK
Ambassador

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ANNEX

Letter dated 30 August 1995 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to share with you some thoughts on several issues concerning the ongoing debate on the reform of the United nations.

The intensity and scope of this debate have become very impressive. Several working groups of the General Assembly are discussing various aspects of the necessary reforms and a large number of research teams, university-based groups and non-governmental organizations are submitting proposals for reforms. Ideas proliferate. There is no disagreement about the need for the reform.

I agree with your view, expressed at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations in San Francisco, to the effect that the main task now is to establish a broad-based and forward-oriented set of ideas and to formulate specific proposals for reform. The purpose should be to develop the United Nations into an adequate instrument to help in global management of the issues mankind is facing today.

Slovenia is intensely interested in the success of these endeavours. Our representatives are participating actively in the working groups of the General Assembly and in various informal settings. I offer some of our views on the issues of the reform o the United Nations with the hope that they will prove to be useful.

After very careful reflection on issues of the reform of the United Nations we came to the conclusion that most of the necessary reforms can take place without a major revision of the Charter. However, it is necessary that the notion of the "living Charter" be given a meaning which will correspond to the needs of our time and, consequently, provide for adequate implementation of the purposes and principles of the Charter in future.

Our proposals could be summarized in the following three commitments:

(a) Commitment to ensure adequate financing of the activities of the United Nations and to further reform the Secretariat;

(b) Commitment to bring up to date the United Nations mechanisms in the field of economic and social development so that the programmes of the recent United Nations summits and conferences can be effectively implemented;

(c) Commitment to reform the Security Council.

I believe that it is important to pursue the goals summarized in the preceding three points with determination and with a sense of urgency. Hence their formulation as commitments.

These three commitments are fundamental and ought to be pursued in parallel. The practical priority might be given to tasks which ought to be less difficult to implement - as implied in the suggested order of commitments.

Let me now indicate some specific tasks for the implementation of the three basic commitments.

1. Commitment to ensure adequate financing of the activities of the United Nations and to further reform the Secretariat.

This commitment consists of two major tasks which are connected reciprocally. Slovenia, as one of the States Members of the United Nations that pays its contributions in full and on time, wishes, first of all, to emphasize the need to ensure the general compliance of the United Nations membership with their duties concerning the payment of their assessed contributions. No financial arrangment can replace this basic duty.

Furthermore, a review of the scale of assessments is overdue. Current proposals which take into account the present levels of GDP of the States Members of the United Nations and other relevant criteria represent an adequate basis for the finalization of a new scale. Acceleration of work towards adoption of the new scale of assessment is another priority in the context of this task.

On the other hand, it is necessary to reorganize and slim down the Secretariat so that its size and composition would correspond to the changing priorities of the Organization. In the same spirit it would be necessary to review the peace-keeping operations with the aim of formulating ways and means to lower and keep their costs within manageable limits. A revised and equitable scale of assessments for the peace-keeping operations would be helpful in this context.

2. Commitment to adjust the United Nations mechanisms in the field of economic and social development so that the programmes of the recent United Nations summits and conferences can be effectively implemented.

The present world situation is characterized by the changed economic environment, by an ever-growing importance of market forces, private initiative, entrepreneurship and free trade, as well as by the new international economic institutions such as the World Trade Organization. In general the role of the State in the economy is being diminished, the command economy in all its facets is slowly weakening and the role of the free market is being enhanced. This fact is to be taken into account by the United Nations. The changed reality has been expressed in a variety of ways at the recent United Nations summits and conferences relating to social, environmental and human rights issues.

The United Nations should in all its activities relating to the economic and social field proceed from a clear understanding of the new circumstances. In these circumstances it should not be expected from the United Nations to create unnecessary supra-State structures, i.e. an "economic security council". The United Nations can be useful by doing more to facilitate high-level policy

dialogue and coordination and carefully targeted operational cooperation for development.

One of the needs in this domain relates to the necessary strengthening of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. The Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on Population and Development have to become places where decision makers meet and devise specific guidelines. It would be very important to ensure the participation of high government officials and ministers, including the trade and finance ministers, at those meetings of the mentioned commissions which require direct communication and decisions at the ministerial level. Furthermore, creative efforts are needed to enhance the role of the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women, and to develop them into effective instruments of practical action in their domains.

Finally, there is a need to update and refocus the mandates and programmes of such organizations as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, with a view to making them more effective in the changed economic and institutional environment of the world today which tends to be very different from the one in which they were created.

3. Commitment to reform the Security Council.

The discussions on the reform of the Security Council have intensified in the past two years. Furthermore, they have coincided with growing scepticism regarding the actual effects of the activities of the present Security Council. Its recent activities in several situations have been characterized, inter alia, by a rapidly growing number of unimplemented resolutions and statements - an important indication of the deficient effectiveness of the Council.

The role of the Council ought to be enhanced and, with this ambition in mind, reasonably and gradually enlarged. The number of its permanent and non-permanent members should be increased. An enlarged Security Council will be in a better position to realistically assess the diverse security issues and diverse responses which might be required.

Slovenia is participating actively in the work of the General Assembly working group on the reform of the Security Council and will continue to make, together with other like-minded States, specific proposals concerning the composition, the working methods and other aspects of the necessary reforms of the Security Council.

There is, however, one specific question which I would like to suggest for your reflection. It relates to the need to develop further the necessary cooperation between the Security Council and the States Members of the United Nations.

The idea of organizing orientation debates open to all Member States whenever the Council feels the need to start considering a new situation or to take a major decision relating to a situation under consideration seems particularly promising. I believe that the Secretary-General should consider

initiating such orientation debates in accordance with his powers under the Charter.

These are, your Excellency, some of my thoughts that I wish to share with you at this stage. I hope that the future months will provide us with an opportunity to meet and discuss these and other ideas and that the work of the United Nations bodies dealing with various aspects of the necessary reform of the United Nations will yield practical results. Let me, in conclusion, reiterate the determination of Slovenia to contirbute its share in this effort.

(Signed) Z. THALER
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Slovenia